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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SES-02 SAA-01 SSM-03 CIAE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01
ACDA-12 IO-13 HA-05 /097 W
----------106950 251323Z /45
O P 251238Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9401
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI ASEC LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION, AUGUST 25, 1978 - 1400 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 4933 (DTG 241200Z AUG 78)

1. SECURITY SITUATION.

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A. CONSULAR VISITORS REPORTED AT LEAST ONE PERSON KILLED BY SNIPING BEGINNING AT ABOUT 100O HOURS ON AUGUST 25 IN THE FUAD SHIHAB FLYWAY. ELSEWHERE BEIRUT WAS GENERALLY QUIET. THE PORT ON AUGUST 24 HAD ITS FIRST EXPLOSION-FREE DAY OF OPERATION SINCE ITS AUGUST 18 REOPENING.

B. IN NORTH LEBANON, EIGHT PERSONS WERE KILLED AND TWO WOUNDED

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IN AN AMBUSH NEAR THE TOWN OF BATRUN EARLY ON AUGUST 24. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THE VICTIMS WERE MEMBERS OF THE PHALANGE PARTY, WHICH ACCUSED THE MILITIA OF FORMER PRESIDENT FRANJIYAH OF HAVING MOUNTED THE ATTACK. THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY, IKE, QUOTED "INFORMED SOURCES" SAYING THAT SOME OF THE VICTIMS WERE PHALANGIST WHO WERE SUSPECTED OF HAVING TAKEN PART IN THE JUNE 13 RAID IN WHICH PRESIDENT FRANJIYAH'S SON, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND GRANDDAUGHTER, AS WELL AS SOME 30 RESIDENTS OF THE TOWN OF IHDIN WERE KILLED. THE PHALANGE PARTY CLAIMED THAT THE AUGUST 24 AMBUSHERS LEFT THE SCENE OF THE ATTACK IN A JEEP THAT HAD BEEN CAPTURED FROM THE PHALANGE MILITIA BY FRANJIYAH'S MEN DURING THE JUNE 13 RAID ON IHDIN.

C. AIR FRANCE'S BEIRUT TO PARIS FLIGHT WAS DELAYED FOR FOUR HOURS BY A BOMB THREAT ON AUGUST 24.

D. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) IS OPENING A 100 BED "FIRST AID STATION," AS A "CONTINGENCY" IN ASHRAFIYAH. ICRC IS ALSO CONSIDERING A MORE SOPHISTICATED EVACUATION HOSPITAL IN JUNIYAH.

2. SOUTH LEBANON. THE PRESS REPORTED THAT RIGHTIST MILITIAS SHALLED THE HASBANI RIVER BASIN, NEAR THE VILLAGE OF HASBAYA DURING THE NIGHT OF 23-24 AUGUST. (THE HAS BEEN AN ALMOST DAILY EVENT RECENTLY.) AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE REPORTED THAT FATAH ARRESTED AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF REJECTIONIST FEDAYEEN,
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FOLLOWING CLASHES BETWEEN REJECTIONISTS AND TROOPS FROM THE NORWEGIAN CONTINGENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (UNIFIL). FATAH ISSUED A WARNING THAT NO MEMBER OF THE PALESTINIAN RESISTENCE MOVEMENT MAY FIRE ON UNIFIL.

3. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS.

A. FORMER PRESIDENT AND RIGHTIST POLITICAL LEADER, CAMILLE CHAMOUN, CONTINUED HIS PATTERN OF INTRANSIGENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON AUGUST 24 WITH A NEW ATTACK ON THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. CHAMOUN COMPLAINED THAT THE ANNOUNCEED INTENTION OF FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTER FUAD BOUTROS TO GO TO DAMASCUS FOR TALKS INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE "BOWING THEIR HEADS TO THE FLOOR" BEFORE THE SYRIANS. CHAMOUN DISMISSED THE IDEA OF A POSSIBLE NEW GOVERNMENT AND/OR NEW "POLITICAL FORMULA" BY SAYING THAT, "WE ARE NOT READY TO ACCEPT ANYTHING OF THIS SORT UNTIL THE SYRIAN FORCES EVACUATE LEBANON." CHAMOUN THEN SUGGESTED CONTEMPTUOUSLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT "BUSY ITSELF WITH ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS" RATHER THAN INVOLVE ITSELF IN "A DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS THAT ARE BEYOND ITS UNDERSTANDING."

B. THE PARLIAMENTARY SUBCOMMITTEE DEBATING THE "ARMY BILL"

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APPROVED THE PRINCIPLE OF ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL TO IMPLEMENT DEFENSE POLICY"WHERE IT CONCERNS THE LEBANESE ARMY." THE COUNCIL, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE SENIOR MUSLIM OFFICIALS COULD PROVIDE FOR BROADENING THE CURRENTLY MARONITE-DOMINATED MILITARY COMMAND STRUCTURE.

4. "OLD" SOUTH LEBANON REFUGEES RETURN HOME. HIGH RELIEF COMMITTEE (HRC) HAS CONCLUDED THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF "OLD" REFUGEES HAVE RETURNED SOUTH. THESE ARE FAMILIES THAT TOOK REFUGE AROUND BEIRUT BEFORE 1975-76, DURING THAT PERIOD AND EVEN THROUGH LATE 1977. NUMBERS ARE TENTATIVELY ESTIMATED AS HIGH AS 22,000 FAMILIES. CHECKING AGAINST BEIRUT DISTRIBUTION LISTS FROM EARLY TO MID-1977 HAS ALREADY BEGUN. (COMMENT: IF THESE PRELIMINARY FINDINGS HOLD, ESPECIALLY IN THE ESTIMATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NUMBERS, THIS WILL MEAN THAT PERHAPS AS MANY AS 100,000 PERSONS CONSIDERED FAIRLY WELL ENTRENCHED IN BEIRUT HAVE, IN FACT, PULLED UP STAKES AND RETURNED "HOME." FULL EFFECT IN TERMS OF ALTERED RESIDENCE PATTERNS, MAKE-UP OF BEIRUT WORK FORCE AND SHIFT IN CONCENTRATION OF RELIEF ASSISTANCE TOWARD SOUTH WILL BEAR WATCHING. END COMMENT.)

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